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THE RELATION OF ART TO SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

THE LOWER GRADES

The fundamental thought in planning the art material for the grades is to let the central activities of each grade unfold the needs and possibilities of art expression. The important point to be remembered is that the child's interest centers in his own life experiences rather than in any problems planned merely to secure a result of skill or an expression of art. Colonel Parker says that the true function of art is "revelation and inspiration," and that "the strongest common factor in art is found in motive."* He also says that motive gives the necessary skill. Those who teach children need to remind themselves of these truths, to turn away from a desire to secure external results, to consider the child, and to note his ways of thinking.

In the first three grades, the child expresses ideas largely through symbols. He expresses activity rather than static form, because he is interested in what people are doing. The little child draws from imagination, not from the object. He is interested in objects only as they relate to his life. Fairy tales, nature study, tobogganing, snowballing, all vivid incidents in a child's daily life, clamor for expression.

The child's images change rapidly, and objects serve only to focus the idea. When the child has a limited written vocabulary of words, he interchanges words and pictures. The expression of the idea is the important thing, the method of expression, secondary. The desire to tell is the most active impulse of the younger children.

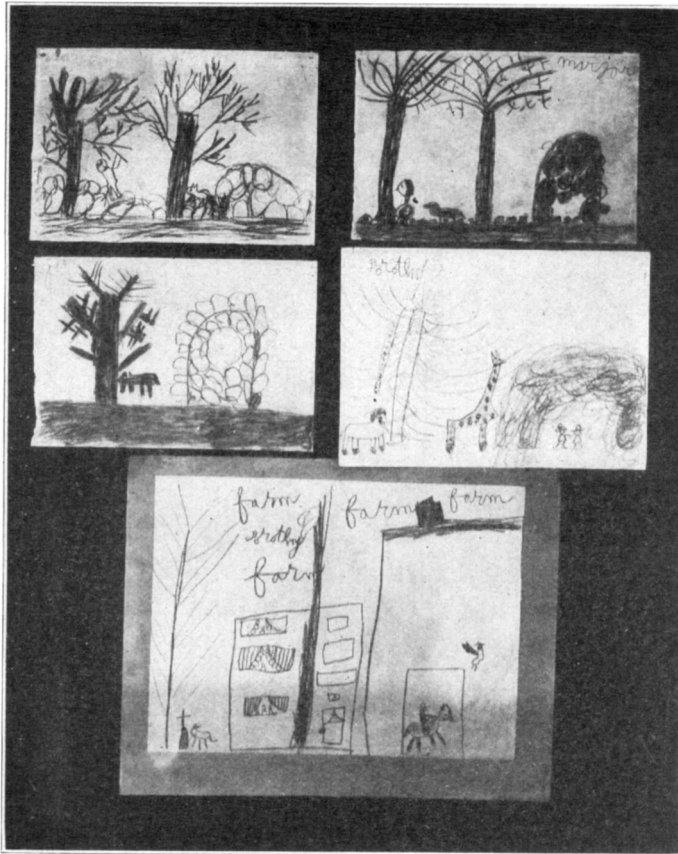
At one time I was very skeptical of what was known as correlation of art with the subject-matter, but as I have realized the possibilities which result when revelation and inspiration are the function of art, my skepticism has changed to approval of this method of presenting art. The intense study of a subject well adapted to the children produces clear images and a desire to express becomes real life experience. The child is the important consideration, and everything else is subordinate. We cannot force correlation in art. Art should never be made the servant of the subject-matter; on the other hand, a high purpose is fulfilled when it becomes its inspira-

**Talks on Pedagogics*, pp. 240-242.

tion. To some degree we are proving this and the following brief summary of the work in the grades indicates the practical working out of the idea.

FIRST GRADE

In the first grade the subject of primitive life, which includes the cave men, the Eskimo, and the Indian, is chosen for the basis for the year's work. (The grade plan also includes special literature work and nature study.) Pictures showing the activities of the cave man, the Eskimo, and the Indian are made by the children. Through play and imagination the child pictures their life: he builds a brush house, an Eskimo house, dresses like an Indian, and in many



FIRST-GRADE DRAWINGS

other ways becomes acquainted with primitive life. The first illustration shows drawings of the primitive caves and brush house (upper half), and an excursion to a farm (lower half). The tree, house, barn, with its interior, the dog's grave, and the child sliding down the hay, are all shown. The morning these pictures were drawn, the children had learned to write the word *farm*. One child wrote the word all over the picture she had made; she seemed to feel that the written symbol completed the story. To secure free expression, we used black crayons, large sheets of paper; for color, the three-color box, with black added, and a No. 4 brush.

SECOND GRADE

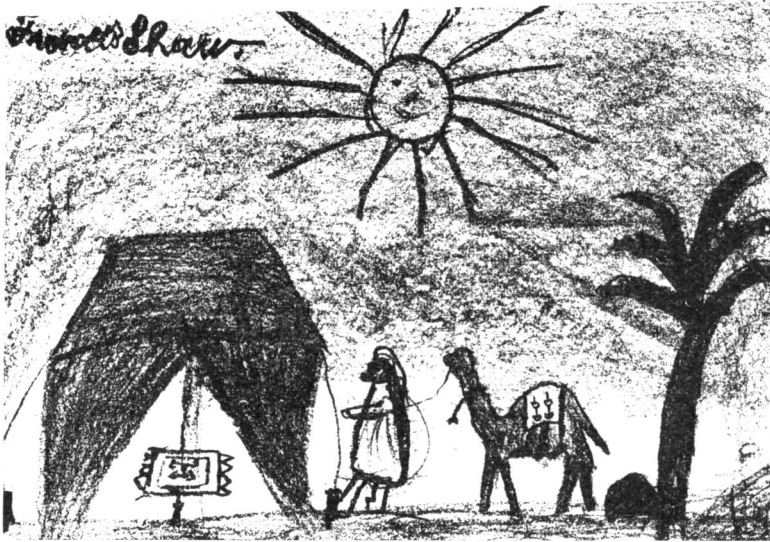
The work of the second grade centers about shepherd life and primitive agriculture. Bible stories of Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, Ruth and Naomi, afford rich background for pictorial material. They unfold varied opportunities for art experiences, such as dramatization of stories, making original poems and songs, primitive dyeing and weaving, sand table stories worked out in modeling, paper construction, painting, and drawing.



CHILD'S DRAWING OF CHICKEN YARD

A flock of a dozen chickens belongs to this grade. The daily care of these pets, through good and bad weather, gives motive not only to picture-making but to oral and written expression, such as the daily chicken report given by the committee.* Here, as in the first grade, the story is the principal interest; symbols are still used,

*See *The Care of the Chickens* in Vol I, *The Social Motive in School Work*.



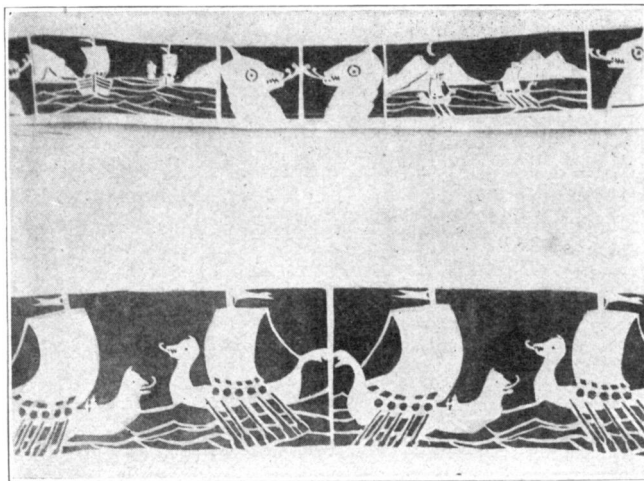
A DESERT SCENE

but there is more effort to make them like the object in mind. The illustrations show, first, life on the desert, and second, the chicken activities.

THIRD GRADE

The interest in the third grade is still largely that of the story, but there is a much greater attempt to express images as realities. The subject of Norse life leads out into many avenues of expression. The children put all their love of the heroic into their pictures for the books which they made to illustrate the life of the courageous and adventure-loving Vikings. Curtains were needed for the wardrobe in their group room. For the design, the children's cuttings of Viking ships and dragon heads were used as a stencil, which the sixth grade children helped them to apply. The material was unbleached muslin, which the children dyed with onion skins set with alum. We persuaded several grocery stores to save onion skins for us. We used two dishpans full for the ten yards of material, and two lumps of alum the size of an egg for the mordant. The color was a soft yellow. The children, working in small groups with the help of the sixth graders, stenciled the design on the curtains in brown oil paint.

Another interesting problem was the designing of costumes for



STENCIL DESIGNED BY THIRD-GRADE PUPILS

the Norse play which the children wrote and gave. We needed brilliant colors, but found it hard to obtain them; so we bought unbleached muslin and the children measured the material and helped to dye it. Later they applied Norse designs to the costumes. The children gained first-hand experience in color from handling of the materials. For example, when purple was needed, the red cloth was dipped into blue dye. One child, after dipping her finger into the red dye, touched it to her blue apron. She exclaimed, "I've made violet!" The children felt they were inventors, as they saw the red changing into purple.

The dyes used for costumes and for paper tinting are the basic dyes manufactured by the National Aniline and Chemical Company, of Buffalo, New York. They are for cotton only, and are furnished in the principal colors. The materials and directions for dyeing six yards of cloth are as follows:

Preparation of Material.—Boil the cloth for several minutes to remove sizing. Dissolve 3 cups of powdered sumac in 3 gallons of water. (Sumac is crude tannic acid of about 30% strength. A corresponding amount of commercial tannic acid may be used, but it is more expensive.) Soak the cloth over night in this solution. Dissolve a level tablespoonful of tartar emetic (potassium antimonytartrate) in 1 gallon of cold water. Remove the cloth from the tannic acid solution, wring out lightly, and place at once in the tartrate solution. Allow to remain for twenty minutes, when it is ready for the dye bath. This process insures a fast color.

Dye Bath.—Dissolve $\frac{3}{4}$ oz. of basic dye in a small amount of vinegar

(acetic acid), as the dye is not soluble in water. Stir the dissolved dye into 3 gal. of water, which has been heated to a temperature of 160° F. Remove the cloth from the tannic acid solution. Wring out lightly, but do not rinse. Place the cloth in the dye bath and stir constantly for fifteen minutes to produce a strong color. If a tint only is desired, use more water in the dye bath. Take cloth out and rinse until free from dye. Dry in current of air if possible.

Lovely colors may be obtained by "topping." After dyeing with one color, for example yellow, dip in red for a moment. This will produce a flame color.

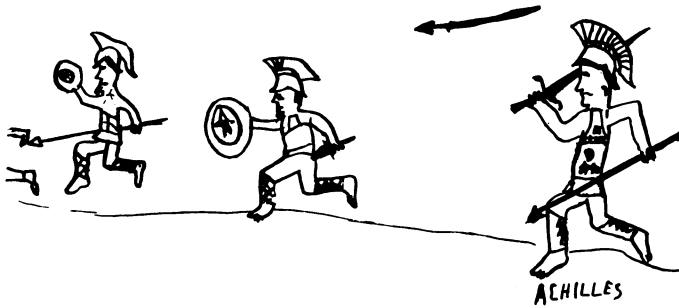
Paper Dyeing.—It is not necessary to prepare the paper by the treatment with tannic acid. Use the dye bath as prepared above and manilla paper. Dip the paper in the dye and dry. This is an excellent way to prepare paper for posters.

FOURTH GRADE

Greek history and stories provide the motive for the study of Greek life, the interest being centered, as in the younger grades, in the story. An effort is made in this grade to secure more careful drawing of the figure, better proportion of objects in the landscape, and a more accurate representation of things as they are in reality. Illustrations made for the note books show the adventures of Odysseus. Greek designs are studied, and this year were worked out on the children's work aprons. This project awakened an interest in design, and a number of the children made original



FOURTH-GRADE DRAWINGS ILLUSTRATING GREEK STORIES



ACHILLES NAME IS WRITTEN UNDER HIM.

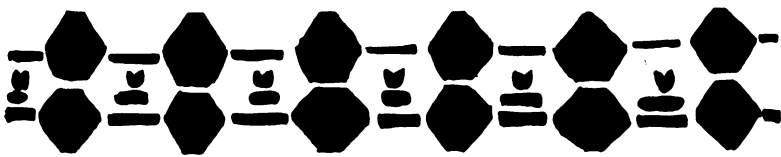
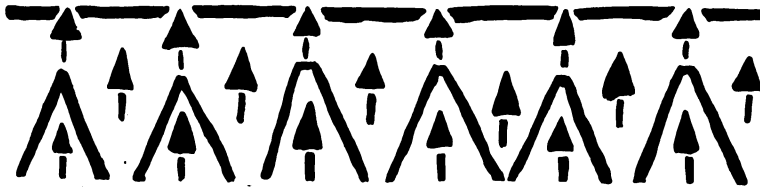
designs, which they applied as stencils on table covers, runners, and bags. This year the city of Athens is being worked out on the sand table. Against a panorama background in muslin painted to represent the sky and distant mountains, typical architecture, a street scene, and the every-day life of the Greeks will be shown.

FIFTH GRADE

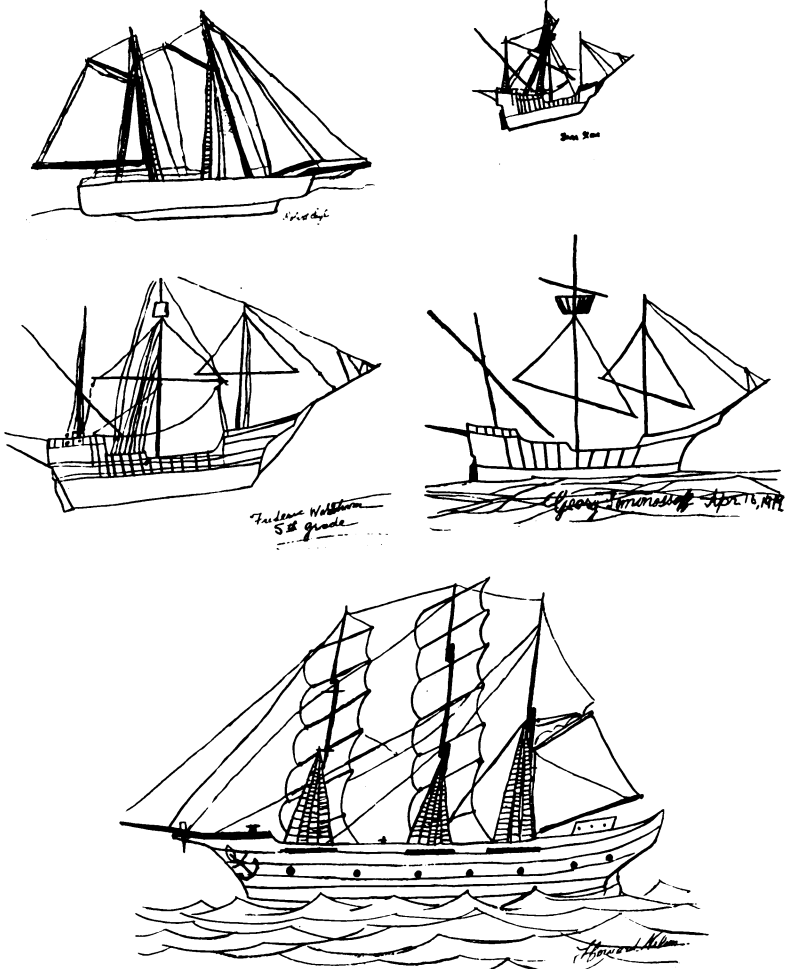
The work of this grade centers about geography, and relates to the period of discovery. Illustrations of travel led to the drawing of ships. Last year a small model of the *Santa Maria* was loaned to the grade. The children's delight in it led to the construction of a number of models of boats. Girls as well as boys enjoyed drawing and making the ships. One of the boys made a large picture of the *Santa Maria*, which was cut as a stencil for the grade banner. In literature, the story of Sinbad offered the material for vivid imaginative pictures.

SIXTH GRADE

The central subject in the sixth grade is history. The life of the hunter, the early trail-maker, and the pioneer offered rich material for picture-making. Stories of adventures with the Indians inspired an interest in drawings representing hunting, the out-of-door life, and the tanning of pelts. The drawing of these activities served to deepen the interest in the subject and to clarify the imagination. This year a series of pictures, representing the life of the hunter, were made for the purpose of illustrating the history notebooks. The four pictures show: a landscape with deer in the foreground; the hunter; the chase; the tanning of the hide.

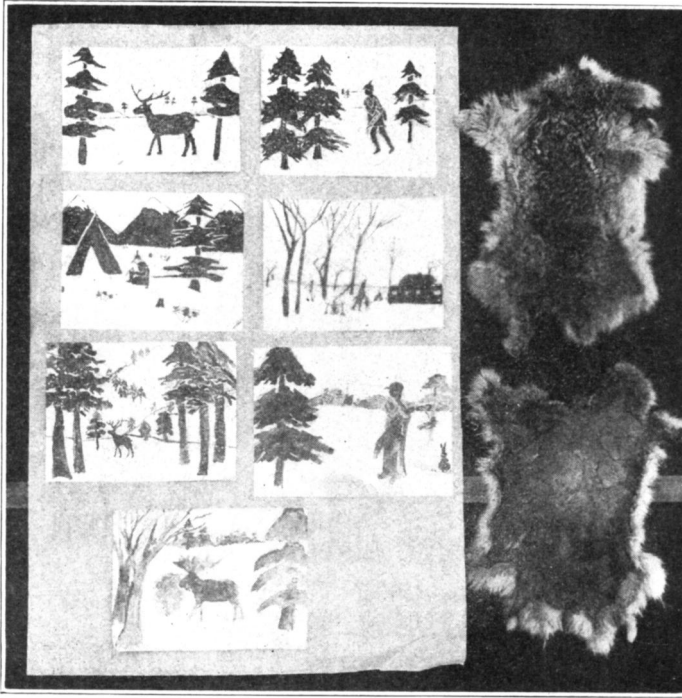


ORIGINAL DESIGNS MADE BY FOURTH-GRADE CHILDREN



FIFTH-GRADE DRAWINGS OF THEIR MODELS OF BOATS

The question of tanning came up this year in the art class. The boys brought a number of rabbit skins which we tanned. We used two methods. The first was to soak the skin over night in a strong solution of alum, the following day stretching the skin on a board to dry. After it was dry, we rubbed in neat's foot oil to make it soft. The second method was to use a solution of gambier, which contains a large percentage of tannic acid. We left the skins in this solution for several days, and then stretched them. Both



SKINS TANNED BY SIXTH-GRADE PUPILS AND DRAWINGS SHOWING
LIFE OF THE HUNTER

methods were successful. The experiment has led one of the boys to decide to make a fur cape for his sister's doll. The excellent quality of the children's work in art this year shows the value of the motive.

In literature, last year, the children were reading the story of *Robin Hood*, and had written a play, which they gave. A group of boys asked to make a little model of the play and its stage. We secured a large wooden box and used paper construction. The figures were constructed on wire frames wrapped with paper toweling and paste. They were dressed in crêpe paper.

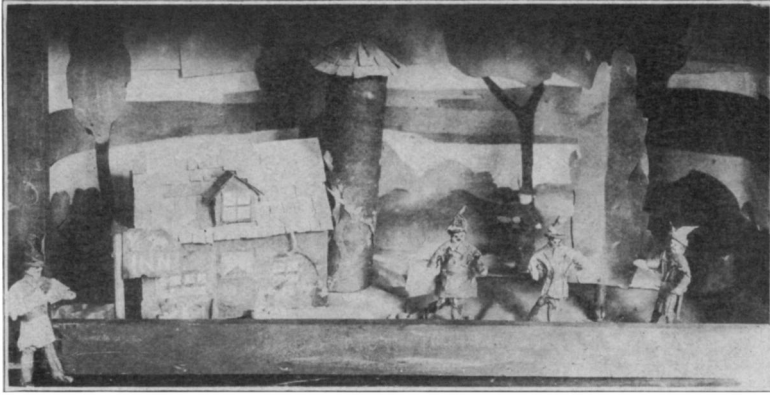
METHODS AND STANDARDS OF WORK

The art in the six grades is taught with the conviction that all children can learn to draw. We accept the fact that all children can learn to read and write, yet we tolerate a belief that only a few



SIXTH-GRADE BOY IN HUNTER'S COSTUME USED AS A MODEL

possess the ability to express ideas in terms of drawing. The drawing of a picture often completes the expression of an idea for which writing alone would have been inadequate. The true mission of art is seen in its usefulness to each child. While it is true that some children express form better than others, we must remember that others express action and color more readily than form. The line comes last. When children are slow to express, it is generally true that their ability to see and to feel is beyond their power of execution. When free choice of occupation is given, nine-tenths of the children in the third and fourth grades choose drawing and painting.



MINIATURE THEATRE CONSTRUCTED BY GROUP OF SIXTH-GRADE BOYS

In the first three grades, no criticism is given the child from the standpoint of form. Children criticize one another's drawings more fairly than can an adult. It often happens, however, that a child, finding that his symbol fails to explain his idea, asks for help. Then, and not until then, is help readily given by the teacher. This is done at the blackboard. For example, if a child needs to know how to draw a horse, we begin together and get the line of the back first, doing this several times to gain freedom. Then the rest of the animal is quickly sketched. While this does not secure perfect results, it gives the child confidence in the possibility of making the symbol correspond with his idea. In the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades images are not so fleeting as in the earlier grades, and the children are willing to work a longer time on one picture. During this period a greater effort for accurate mastery of form is possible, since abstract technical work is worth little and makes art drudgery. The study of the figure, unrelated to experience, is mere labor. It is through the ideals which result in the expression of the finer feelings that art has its real function, and we attain to this standard when we recognize the inspirational nature and opportunities of the subject.